

WE CLAIM:

1. A system for enhancing water, comprising:
 - a housing having an inlet and an outlet;
 - source water capable of being in fluid communication with the inlet;
 - a filter component within the housing, the filter component containing water treatment material, and the filter component capable of having fluid communication with the inlet;
 - a fluid path within the water treatment material wherein the source water can flow along the fluid path and be treated by the water treatment material, thereby converting the source water to treated water, the treated water capable of being in fluid communication with the outlet; and
 - a first enhancement module adjacent the outlet and capable of dispensing a first enhancement into the outlet, thereby converting the treated water to enhanced water as the treated water flows through the outlet;wherein water flow in the system is driven solely by a force selected from the group consisting of gravity, pressure from a source water line, pressure from a hand pump, and combinations thereof.
2. The system of Claim 1 wherein the system is a plumbed-in system selected from the group consisting of faucet-mount systems, in-faucet systems, under-sink systems, countertop systems, and refrigerator water systems.
3. The system of Claim 1 wherein the system is a gravity flow system selected from the group consisting of stand-alone filtration pitchers, countertop systems, water dispensers, and portable water bottles.
4. The system of Claim 1 wherein the water treatment material is selected from the group consisting of activated carbon, carbonized synthetic materials, hydrophobic polymeric adsorbents, activated alumina, activated bauxite, fuller's earth, diatomaceous earth, silica gel, calcium sulfate, zeolite particles, inert particles, sand, surface charge-modified particles, ceramic particles, metal oxides, metal hydroxides, and combinations thereof.
5. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a valve adjacent the outlet, the valve capable of preventing enhanced water from flowing from the outlet toward the filter component.

6. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a chamber as a component of the outlet whereby the treated water and the first enhancement can be mixed together in the chamber before exiting the system.

7. The system of Claim 6 wherein the chamber comprises an agitation tool to augment mixing of the treated water and the first enhancement.

8. The system of Claim 7 wherein the agitation tool is selected from the group consisting of rotors, baffles, screws, and augers .

9. The system of Claim 1 wherein the first enhancement is selected from the group consisting of flavorings, dyes, minerals, vitamins, herbal supplements, nutritional supplements, phytonutrients, probiotics, homoeopathic remedies, amino acids, enzymes, hormones, standard prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, and combinations thereof.

10. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a first consumer control, whereby a consumer can regulate an amount of the first enhancement that is dispensed into the outlet.

11. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a second enhancement module adjoining the outlet and capable of dispensing a second enhancement into the treated water as the treated water flows through the outlet.

12. The system of Claim 11, further comprising a second consumer control, whereby a consumer can regulate an amount of the second enhancement that is dispensed into the outlet.

13. The system of Claim 1 wherein the source water and the treated water are maintained at pressures less than about 125 psi throughout the system.

14. The system of Claim 13 wherein the source water and the treated water are maintained at pressures less than about 100 psi throughout the system.

15. A system for enhancing water, comprising:

a housing having an inlet and an outlet;

source water capable of being in fluid communication with the inlet;

a filter component within the housing, the filter component containing water treatment material, and the filter component capable of having fluid communication with the inlet;

a fluid path within the water treatment material wherein the source water can flow along the fluid path and be treated by the water treatment

material, thereby converting the source water to treated water, the treated water capable of being in fluid communication with the outlet; and

a first enhancement module adjacent the outlet and capable of dispensing a first enhancement into the outlet, thereby converting the treated water to enhanced water as the treated water flows through the outlet; wherein the system contains no electrically powered water pumps.

16. The system of Claim 15, further comprising a valve adjacent the outlet, the valve capable of preventing enhanced water from flowing from the outlet toward the filter component.

17. The system of Claim 15, further comprising a chamber as a component of the outlet wherein the treated water and the first enhancement can be mixed together in the chamber before exiting the system.

18. A system for enhancing water, comprising:

a housing having an inlet and an outlet;

source water capable of being in fluid communication with the inlet;

a filter component within the housing, the filter component containing water treatment material and the filter component capable of having fluid communication with the source water;

a fluid path within the water treatment material wherein the source water can flow along the fluid path and be treated by the water treatment material, thereby converting the source water to treated water, the treated water capable of being in fluid communication with the outlet; and

a first enhancement module adjacent the outlet and capable of dispensing a first enhancement into the outlet, thereby converting the treated water to enhanced water as the treated water flows through the outlet;

wherein the source water and the treated water are maintained at pressures less than about 125 psi throughout the system.

19. The system of Claim 18 wherein the source water and the treated water are maintained at pressures less than about 100 psi throughout the system.

20. The system of Claim 18, further comprising a valve adjacent the outlet, the valve capable of preventing enhanced water from flowing from the outlet toward the filter component.

21. The system of Claim 18, further comprising a chamber as a component of the outlet wherein the treated water and the first enhancement can be mixed together in the chamber before exiting the system.

22. A water enhancement device, comprising:

a housing having an inlet and an outlet;

a filter component within the housing, the filter component containing water treatment material comprising activated carbon, the filter component capable of having fluid communication with both the inlet and the outlet; and

a first enhancement module adjoining the outlet and capable of dispensing a first enhancement into the outlet;

wherein water flow through the device is driven solely by a force selected from the group consisting of gravity, pressure from a source water line, a hand pump and combinations thereof.

23. A water enhancement device, comprising:

a housing having an inlet and an outlet;

a filter component within the housing, the filter component containing water treatment material comprising activated carbon, the filter component capable of having fluid communication with both the inlet and the outlet; and

a first enhancement module adjoining the outlet and capable of dispensing a first enhancement into the outlet;

wherein the device contains no electrically powered water pumps.

24. The device of Claim 23 wherein the enhancement is selected from the group consisting of flavorings, dyes, minerals, vitamins, herbal supplements, nutritional supplements, phytonutrients, probiotics, homoeopathic remedies, amino acids, enzymes, hormones, standard prescription medications, and over-the-counter medications, and combinations thereof.

25. The device of Claim 23, further comprising a first consumer control, whereby a consumer can control a dose of the first enhancement that is added to the outlet.

26. The device of Claim 25 wherein the first consumer control activates a dispensing mechanism.

27. The device of Claim 26 wherein, upon activation, the dispensing mechanism automatically dispenses a preset dose of the first enhancement.

28. The device of Claim 23 further comprising a second enhancement module adjoining the outlet and capable of dispensing a second enhancement into the outlet.

29. An enhancement module for a water enhancement system, comprising:
a reservoir capable of containing an enhancement material;
an attachment portion adapted for attaching the module to the water enhancement system adjacent an outlet of the water enhancement system;
a consumer control in communication with the reservoir, the consumer control capable of activating a mechanism to release at least a portion of the enhancement material from the reservoir to the dispensing unit; and
a dispensing unit in communication with the reservoir, the dispensing unit capable of supplying a selected amount of enhancement material to the outlet of the water enhancement system.

30. The module of Claim 29 wherein the enhancement material is selected from the group consisting of flavorings, dyes, minerals, vitamins, herbal supplements, nutritional supplements, phytonutrients, probiotics, homoepathic remedies, amino acids, enzymes, hormones, standard prescription medications, and over-the-counter medications, and combinations thereof.

31. The module of Claim 29 wherein the form of the enhancement material is selected from the group consisting of liquids, powders, microcapsules, nanocapsules, nebulized nanoparticles, nanoemulsions, micelles, gases, and combinations thereof.

32. The module of Claim 29 wherein the reservoir can be filled with enhancement material multiple times.

33. The module of Claim 29 wherein the consumer control is selected from the group consisting of buttons, knobs, dials, levers, airbladders, slides, catches, wheels, and combinations thereof.

34. The module of Claim 29 wherein the portion of the enhancement material comprises a measured dose.

35. An enhancement module for a water enhancement system, comprising:
a) a disposable cartridge, the disposable cartridge comprising:
a reservoir capable of containing an enhancement material; and

an attachment portion adapted for removably attaching the cartridge adjacent an outlet of the water enhancement system;

b) a dispensing unit capable of connecting to the reservoir in the disposable cartridge, the dispensing unit supplying a conduit for movement of enhancement material from the reservoir to an outlet of the water enhancement system; and

c) a consumer control capable of activating release of at least a portion of the enhancement material from the reservoir in the disposable cartridge to the dispensing unit.

36. An enhancement module for a water enhancement system, comprising:

a) a disposable cartridge, the disposable cartridge comprising:

a reservoir capable of containing an enhancement material;

an attachment portion adapted for removably attaching the cartridge adjacent an outlet of the water enhancement system; and

a consumer control capable of activating release of at least a portion of the enhancement material from the reservoir; and

b) a dispensing unit capable of connecting to the reservoir in the disposable cartridge, the dispensing unit capable of supplying a conduit for movement of enhancement material from the reservoir to an outlet of the water enhancement system.

37. An enhancement module for a water enhancement system, comprising:

a) a disposable cartridge, the disposable cartridge comprising:

a reservoir capable of containing an enhancement material;

an attachment portion adapted for removably attaching the cartridge adjacent an outlet of the water enhancement system; and

a dispensing unit connected to the reservoir, the dispensing unit supplying a conduit for movement of enhancement material out of the reservoir; and

b) a consumer control capable of activating release of at least a portion of the enhancement material from the reservoir in the disposable cartridge to the dispensing unit in the disposable cartridge.

38. An enhancement module for a water enhancement system, comprising:

a disposable cartridge, the disposable cartridge comprising:

a reservoir capable of containing an enhancement material;
an attachment portion adapted for removably attaching the cartridge adjacent an outlet of the water enhancement system;
a dispensing unit connected to the reservoir, the dispensing unit supplying a conduit for movement of enhancement material out of the reservoir; and
a consumer control capable of activating release of at least a portion of the enhancement material from the reservoir to the dispensing unit.

39. A method of mixing an enhanced water beverage, comprising:
providing a water enhancement system containing an inlet, an outlet, a water filter component and no electric water pump;
supplying source water to the inlet;
percolating the source water through the water filter component, thus forming treated water;
dispensing an enhancement material into the outlet; and
flowing the treated water through the outlet, thus forming an enhanced water beverage in the outlet.

40. The method of Claim 39 wherein providing source water comprises turning on a water faucet.

41. The method of Claim 39 wherein providing source water comprises allowing source water to flow from a source water container.

42. The method of Claim 39 wherein percolating the source water through the water filter component comprises allowing the source water to pass through a water treatment material that contains activated carbon.

43. The method of Claim 39 wherein dispensing the enhancement comprises releasing an enhancement material from an enhancement module, the module adjacent the outlet.

44. The method of Claim 39 wherein dispensing the enhancement material comprises activating a consumer control to provide a measured portion of the enhancement material to the outlet.

45. The method of Claim 39 further comprising holding the treated water in a treated water container after percolating and before flowing.

46. The method of Claim 45 wherein flowing the treated water comprises adjusting the position of the water enhancement system to allow the treated water to pour out through the outlet.